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July/August 2006

TODAY



God and Suffering
Is There a Nurse in the House?

Songs of Healing, Songs of Health
Something about Mary (Magdalene)





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ACT BOLDLY FOR HEALTH

Whether we call it "health" or "wholeness" or "wellness," well-being is hard to define. But we know it when we don't have it. In this issue, we look at some of the aspects of being made well.

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(Magdalene)

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To Your Health

by Kate Sprutta Elliott

HOW ARE YOU? REALLY, HOW ARE YOU? When we plan each issue of *LWT*, we take time to pray for the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit in our planning. We pray for the writers who will struggle to get their ideas into the best words possible. And we pray for you, dear readers, that you may find blessing in each story. We hope you are well.

In this issue you will find the theme of health woven through most of the articles. The two sessions of our summer Bible study, *Act Boldly for Health*, explore how we can act boldly for health in a crisis and how we can work toward the goal of gaining health and balance in our lives. In session 2, authors Ron and Sue Ann Glusenkamp use the account of Jesus calming the storm (Mark 4:35–41) as a way of gaining insight into how God is with us in the stormy weather of our lives. In session 3, they explore Philippians 3:9–14 as they exhort us to “press on toward the goal.” Why? Because Jesus Christ has made us his own (verse 14).

For us, wellness doesn’t just mean physical health: it’s balance among all the areas of our life that makes for wholeness. Each person has her own definitions and goals for health and wellness. We all know someone whose physical being is in great shape but whose emotional life is out of balance. And we also know someone whose spiritual strength is the anchor of the community, even as she works with her doctors to recover from heart disease.

In “Songs of Healing, Songs of Health,” Karen Bates-Olson reminds us of the healing power of

hymns and music. Martin Luther said that “music is the best balm for a sad heart,” and haven’t we all experienced that at some difficult time in our lives? I think of singing a favorite hymn at a dear friend’s funeral and what comfort it offered.

St. Mary Magdalene is remembered in the church year on July 22. She, too, experienced a healing and restoration—Luke’s Gospel tells us that seven demons had gone out from Mary! Judy Gross Chiarelli writes in “Something about Mary (Magdalene)” that after her conversion, Mary’s commitment to Jesus was so complete that she never doubted him, even as she wept beside his tomb.

Other women that *Lutheran Book of Worship* lists in the Lesser Commemorations during the summer are two nurses: Florence Nightingale and Clara Maass (August 13). Kati Kluckman-Ault helps us learn about how parish nurses serve in many ministries across the church. She says that weaving spirituality into nursing is the foundation of holistic, integrated care. Would your congregation consider beginning a health ministry, including a parish nurse?

Finally, summer provides many opportunities to enhance your health and well-being: enjoy a big chunk of watermelon, splash under a sprinkler, watch fireflies in the evening dusk. We wish you joy-filled summer days.

Kate Sprutta Elliott is editor of *Lutheran Woman Today*.

One Big Family

by Marj Leegard

ON A LOVELY SUMMER SATURDAY MORNING THERE IS A CRY THAT GOES UP FROM BREAKFAST TABLES ACROSS THE LAND. Listen closely and you can hear the individual voices, “Do I *have* to go?”

You can be sure they are not complaining about a fishing trip, a day at the beach, or an afternoon ballgame. Where they don’t want to go is a family reunion. They are afraid they won’t know everyone, or worse, *anyone*.

Cousins grow up and begin families and then those children have children and soon there are little puddles of strangers purporting to be relatives. We scan the name tags and look for identifying T-shirts and soon the fear subsides, and we can see the cousin who had a pony and the aunt who kissed all the relatives, even the little boys who tried to escape.

We share the stories of Christmas at Uncle Charlie’s and the big white popcorn balls on a platter on top of the oak ice box. We remember Uncle Wilbur’s little dog who had his own spoon and ate ice cream from his master’s dish. We retell our memories of Santa Claus arriving in the middle of a cacophony of turkeys gobbling their alarm. We listen to the stories and tell the stories until the base for our relationship lies in the shared memories.

Children endure the greeting “My, how you’ve grown!” a thousand times, and we all drift toward the commonality—the feast. There we find that we have more than a name and a family tree together. We all make potato salad without peas and broccoli, and that is good.

“A friend is always a friend and relatives are born to share our troubles,” says Proverbs 17:17 (CEV).

We wait for the weddings and the letters and the birth announcements and we share in the sad times. Family is not an exclusive definition. Family includes that friend who is like a sister to you.

Family ties exist in nursing homes and apartment buildings. The common name is simply *good friend*. Friend becomes family, closer than cousins. That family can be found in that worship gathering where prayers rise up from concern for you, and your prayers join for them. That family shares your joys and is always there in your troubles. Gathering for worship with that family is like a reunion complete with the feast.

As we look around the park where our once-a-year reunion is held, we can see other families enjoying the day together. We can be sure that there are gatherings all over the world. Most are not as fortunate as we are with our loaded plates, but we remind ourselves that the hungry are not hungry strangers, but brothers and sisters to us. Their pain is our pain and our wealth is for them also.

Your relatives on your mother’s side may not be planning a reunion this summer, but all the other family ties invite you to come and rest in the comfort of relatives who share your troubles. They will be there for your joys, too!

Marj Leegard and her husband, Jerome, live in Detroit Lakes, Minn.



The Truth about Hormone Therapy

by Molly M. Ginty

THE NEWS RATTLED MARILYN KENTZ EVEN MORE THAN THE HOT FLASHES AND MOOD SWINGS SHE SUFFERED.

“When a 2002 study found that the drugs I was taking for menopause could increase the risk of heart attack, I was shocked and terrified,” says Kentz, 58, a writer in Los Angeles. “My father died of heart disease at the age of 42. I was determined to avoid his fate, so I quit hormone therapy as soon as I heard about the study’s results.”

Without her daily doses of synthetic estrogen and progestin, Kentz suffered hot flashes that kept her up nights and mood swings that left her weeping inconsolably. After a six-month break from medication, she started using the Femring, a vaginal ring that releases estrogen and that, taken along with progestin pills, has helped her feel much better.

Health advocates say that one-third of the 18 million women who once used hormone therapy are likely going without treatment or trying alternative remedies.

First prescribed in the late 1960s, hormone therapy drugs—either an estrogen-progestin combination or an estrogen-only version for women who have had hysterectomies—were touted as the “cure” for menopause (the stage when women stop menstruating and estrogen levels drop) and as protection against heart disease and breast cancer.

Then came the July 2002 publication of landmark research in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The federally funded Women’s Health Initiative study, which enrolled 161,000 women,

found that hormone therapy causes slight increases in the risk of breast cancer, heart attacks, strokes, and blood clots and that these risks outweigh the drugs’ benefits of minor protection against colorectal cancer and bone fractures.

Thus began a series of blows to hormone therapy’s reputation. Follow-up studies by Women’s Health Initiative researchers showed that estrogen-progestin therapy can increase the risk of dementia, and that combination and estrogen-only therapy can cause urinary incontinence. Other studies showed that combination therapy can boost the risk of breast and endometrial cancers, prompting the United Nations’ International Agency for Research on Cancer to reclassify the medication as “carcinogenic” instead of “possibly carcinogenic.”

In the wake of these developments, sales of synthetic hormones plummeted 40 percent, and alternative remedies began to abound.

Instead of taking conventional hormone therapy, menopausal women started trying estrogen creams, gels, and patches that deliver estrogen through the skin instead of in the pill form studied by the Women’s Health Initiative. They took serotonin reuptake inhibitors (anti-depressants including Effexor) to ease hot flashes, and bisphosphonates (including Fosamax and Actonel) and selective estrogen receptor modulators (including Evista) to maintain bone density.

Women also snapped up “bioidentical” hormones (plant-based estrogens derived from yams and other natural sources and sold under such names as

Prometrium and TriEst) and health store remedies including the herbal supplements black cohosh and phytoestrogens (found in soybeans, legumes, and whole grains, these mimic human estrogen).

Were these women making the right move? Nearly four years later, the jury is still out. In November, the Food and Drug Administration issued warnings to 16 alternative hormone therapy companies for marketing unapproved drugs. But some women who take these remedies swear by them, and there are no widespread reports of adverse effects.

While the debate on alternative remedies continues, hormone therapy itself may be making a comeback. In 2003, separate studies commissioned by two drug companies found that a quarter of women who had stopped using conventional hormone therapy had since resumed it.

Last year, Wyeth Pharmaceuticals, maker of Prempro and Premarin (the two drugs used in the Women's Health Initiative study) released two low-dose versions of each product with plans to market several more versions soon.

"Thus far, low-dose hormone therapy appears to be safe and effective and to relieve symptoms just as well as older, higher-dose versions," says Dr. Wulf Utian, director of the North American Menopause Society.

What's the upshot for women seeking relief from the symptoms of menopause?

For now, the Food and Drug Administration recommends hormone therapy for women at high risk for the conditions the drugs can treat: hip fractures and cancer of the bowel or rectum. The FDA recommends that other women use hormone therapy only

if they are plagued by severe menopausal symptoms such as mood swings, hot flashes, disrupted sleep, and vaginal dryness, itching, or burning.

Health advocates urge women who are already at risk for problems associated with hormone therapy (breast cancer, heart attacks, strokes, and blood clots) to steer clear of the drugs. They advise all menopausal women to discuss hormone therapy and alternative treatments with their doctors, to take the drugs in the lowest possible dose, and to use them only as long as symptoms persist.

While authorities continue taking a conservative approach to alternative treatments, scientists are beginning to study these remedies' safety and efficacy. "We're hoping that researchers will develop treatments that work as well as conventional hormone therapy," says Marilyn Kentz. "We're hoping for remedies that can not only ease our symptoms, but also keep us in good health."

Molly M. Ginty lives in New York. Her work has appeared in *Ms.*, *Marie Claire*, *Redbook*, and *Women's eNews*.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Institutes of Health, "Menopausal Hormone Therapy Information"
www.nih.gov/PHTindex.htm

Our Bodies, Ourselves, "Midlife and Menopause"
www.ourbodiesourselves.org/book/chapter.asp?id=26

North American Menopause Society
www.menopause.org

WHATEVER STAGE OF LIFE YOU'RE IN, and whether you're physically fit or living with chronic illness, you can find ways to be a wise steward of your health and well-being. Our health and wholeness are important keys to responding to God's call for us and acting boldly on that call. That's why Women of the ELCA have embarked on a health initiative for the 2005-2008 triennium: Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls. This ongoing column represents our commitment to the issue of women's health.

JULY

compiled by Audrey Novak Riley from sources including *Renewing Worship, Sundays and Seasons*, and *Lutheran Book of Worship*, published by Augsburg Fortress, Publishers (www.augsburgfortress.org)

The month of July is named after Julius Caesar, who reformed the calendar in 45 BC. The month was called Quintilis until it was renamed in his honor.

1

CATHERINE WINKWORTH, JOHN MASON NEALE, HYMN TRANSLATORS

These two Britons translated many hymns into English: Neale devoted himself to ancient Latin and Greek hymns, and Winkworth to German hymns. Thirty of her translations are in *LBW*.

3

THOMAS, APOSTLE

“Doubting” Thomas shows the depth of his faith later in John’s Gospel: He is the first to call Jesus “My Lord and my God!” (20:28).

4

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Give thanks today for the courage of our nation’s founders, who risked their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor for our liberty. Read the Declaration of Independence at www.archives.gov.

6

JAN HUS, MARTYR

Hus spoke out against abuses in the church a century before Luther. His spiritual descendants are the Moravian Church, a full communion partner with the ELCA. Read about our other partners at www.elca.org/ecumenical/fullcommunion.

11

BENEDICT OF NURSIA, ABBOT OF MONTE CASSINO

Benedict wanted to live as a holy hermit, but people kept gathering around him. He organized them under his Rule, which fosters a moderate, balanced, hospitable way of community life, where visitors are welcomed as Christ would be. He died in about the year 547.

22

MARY MAGDALENE, APOSTLE

Scripture tells us that this dedicated follower of Christ was the first to hear the voice of the Risen Lord. Read more about her beginning on page 12.

23

BIRGITTA OF SWEDEN, RENEWER OF THE CHURCH

A noble widow, Birgitta founded an order of nuns and monks who prayed and served the poor under the direction of an abbess. She died on this date in 1373.

25

JAMES, APOSTLE

James, son of Zebedee, is the only one of the Twelve whose martyrdom is recorded in Scripture (Acts 12:1–2).

There is a famous shrine to him in Spain—Santiago de Compostela—to which pilgrims have traveled since perhaps as early as the ninth century.

28**JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH,
HEINRICH SCHÜTZ, GEORGE
FRIDERICK HANDEL, MUSICIANS**

Bach (1685–1750) wrote about 200 cantatas for the church. He has been called “the fifth evangelist” for his proclamation of the gospel in music. Handel’s great work *Messiah* (written in 1741) is a musical retelling of the history of salvation, directly from Scripture. Schütz (1585–1672) wrote choral settings of biblical texts. Read more on page 24.

29**OLAF, KING OF NORWAY**

This ferocious Viking was baptized after a career raiding with the longships. Taking the throne of Norway, he fought just as fiercely to establish the faith and unite the country. The pagan clans resented this; Olaf died fighting them on this date in 1030. The lion on the crest of Norway holds the instrument of Olaf’s martyrdom, a battle ax.

29**MARY, MARTHA, AND LAZARUS
OF BETHANY**

Jesus found hospitality and friendship in the home of these sisters and their brother. We can welcome Christ into our homes as well.

CALENDAR NOTES**AUGUST**

In 8 BC, the Roman month of Sextilis was renamed August to honor the emperor Augustus. The month was 30 days long then, and the story goes that he wanted his month to have 31 just like that of his predecessor, the great Julius Caesar, so he stole a day from February. That’s the story, anyway.

8**DOMINIC, FOUNDER OF THE ORDER OF
PREACHERS**

Dominic’s work was to call fallen-away Christians back to the faith. He founded the Order of Preachers, who lived in poverty, studied philosophy and theology, and used kindness and gentle argument to persuade people back to the flock. He died on this date in 1220.

10**LAWRENCE, DEACON AND MARTYR**

In the year 258, the Roman emperor Valerian demanded that deacon Lawrence turn over the treasure of the church. He brought a crowd of orphans, lepers, and disabled people to the emperor and said, “Here is the treasure of the church!”

11**CLARE, RENEWER OF THE CHURCH**

Clare was inspired by the preaching of St. Francis of Assisi to form a community of women who lived the Franciscan charism. The Poor Clares still live in joyful apostolic poverty, just as their foundress did. Clare died in 1253.

13**FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE, CLARA MAASS, RENEWERS OF SOCIETY**

Florence was trained as a nurse at Kaiserswerth, Germany, with a Lutheran order of deaconesses, and worked tirelessly to reform hospital care. She led a group of 38 nurses to serve in the Crimean War, and returned to London a hero.

Clara Maass, daughter of devout Lutheran parents, was a nurse in the Spanish-American War, where five times as many troops died of disease as of battle wounds. She worked with Dr. Walter Reed to eradicate yellow fever. She contracted the disease and died in 1901 at the age of 25.

Parish nurses continue the good work of these two pioneering women; see more on page 20 about their ministry.

14**MAXIMILIAN KOLBE, KAJ MUNK, MARTYRS**

Kolbe was a Polish priest imprisoned for helping Jews escape the Nazis. In Auschwitz, he volunteered for execution in place of another man, a husband and father. He died on this date in 1941. Munk was a Danish Lutheran pastor who encouraged the Resistance in his homeland. He was executed by the Gestapo on January 5, 1944.

15**MARY, MOTHER OF OUR LORD**

The early church honored Mary with the Greek title *Theotokos*, meaning God-bearer. Martin Luther used the same title in his writings.

20**BERNARD, ABBOT OF CLAIRVAUX**

This Cistercian monk was a mystical writer deeply devoted to the humanity of Christ and to the emotional aspect of faith. This shows in his hymn "Jesus, the very thought of you" (*LBW* 316). He died on this date in 1153.

24**BARTHOLOMEW, APOSTLE**

Little is known about Bartholomew from the Gospels; he is only named in lists. Tradition tells us he was martyred by flaying.

28**AUGUSTINE, BISHOP OF HIPPO**

A brilliant philosopher and theologian, Augustine came late to faith. He was baptized by Bishop Ambrose of Milan in 387. His *Confessions* contains a moving account of his conversion. It is widely read even today, as is his book *City of God*. His philosophical and theological thinking were greatly influential for later Christians.

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SOMETHING ABOUT MARY

Magdalene

by Judy Gross Chiarelli

I RECEIVED A CALL FROM A WOMAN in a Bible study group a few years back. “Have you read the book *The DaVinci Code*?” she asked. “What’s the truth about Mary Magdalene? Is *The DaVinci Code* accurate, and if it is, why has all that information been hidden for so long?”

No, I told her, author Dan Brown has written a work of fiction, and there is not much truth in his best-selling book (and now movie). It is an engaging, fast-paced, and interesting story, but it uses a myth about one of the most misunderstood and poorly researched characters of the New Testament, Mary Magdalene, as a central plot device.

Many myths, legends, and misconceptions about Mary Magdalene have evolved over the past 2,000 years. Christian traditions have mixed and matched the Magdalene with many other Marys in the Bible—and with other biblical and non-biblical characters—long before Brown’s modern-day best-

seller. If you ask 10 people who Mary Magdalene was, you will get seven different answers. After I gave a talk on the subject at a church a few months ago, a man leaned over and admitted with a blush, “I always thought she was the woman at the well.” I just smiled and thought, “That’s one I haven’t heard before!”

The information in this article about Mary Magdalene comes from the four Gospels. Several non-biblical works about her exist, but let’s stick with the truth in our Christian context—the biblical canon. As with the stories of most of the women of the Bible, we will have to bring Mary Magdalene’s story out from the shadows, quilt together the pieces of information from the Gospels, and see what unfolds before us.

THE MYTHS ABOUT MARY

Before considering who Mary Magdalene was, let’s talk about who she wasn’t. The most prominent

myth that crumbles very quickly when we look at the biblical facts is that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute. The Bible never says that Mary was a prostitute and does not even call her a sinner. Beginning in about the sixth century, a tradition grew up that associated Mary with the unnamed woman in Luke 7:36–50, casting her as a woman of ill repute.

It is clear that Mary is not that woman because she is introduced to us at the beginning of the very next chapter: “The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources” (Luke 8:1–3). The word used for *resources* in the original Greek is used in other Gospel accounts to mean *possessions* or *property*.



The Gospels of Mark and Matthew also make reference to Mary Magdalene and the other Galilean women providing for Jesus and his disciples (Mark 15:40–41; Matthew 27:55). These few verses tell us much about the Galilean women followers of Jesus: They traveled with Jesus and his apostles. They provided for them and the new family of faith forming around Jesus, most likely in traditional ways of table service and hospitality. Most importantly, they provided financial support for them out of their resources.

Other myths crumble quickly when we look more closely at the Gospel accounts. There is a confusion of Marys in the New Testament. Mary Magdalene was not Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. That Mary was from Bethany outside of Jerusalem in Judea. Mary Magdalene was from Magdala in the Galilee, a town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee just south of Capernaum.

There is also nothing to link the Mary who anointed Jesus in the house of Lazarus in Bethany (John 12:3), or in some accounts in the house of Simon the Leper (Matthew 26:6; Mark 14:3), with Mary Magdalene. The Gospel of John leads us to believe

it was Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus.

There are many other myths and misconceptions tied to Mary Magdalene, far too many to mention here.

A WOMAN OF SUBSTANCE

The story that becomes clear from the facts the biblical accounts give us is far more interesting than any of the myths. Mary Magdalene appears to have held a position of leadership not only within the group of Galilean women disciples who followed Jesus, but within the larger group of disciples forming as a family of faith around Jesus. There are important patterns to consider when piecing together Mary's story.

Mary Magdalene's name is mentioned first in three of the four Gospel introductions of the Galilean women disciples and in the subsequent crucifixion accounts, indicating her leadership role within that group. In the Gospel of John, she is listed with the mother of Jesus and others as a witness to Jesus' crucifixion and burial. Mary Magdalene and other women witnessed the burial of Jesus and provided the details of how he was laid in the tomb.

Mary Magdalene is also the only woman in the Gospels not linked to a male family mem-

ber. With the exception of two women—Salome (Mark 15:40, 16:1) and Susanna (Luke 8:3)—Mary Magdalene is the only woman in the Gospels whose name stands on its own. Other references to women identify them by family relationships, such as Mary “the wife of Clopas,” Joanna “the wife of Herod's steward Chuza,” Mary “the mother of James and Joseph, the mother of the sons of Zebedee,” Martha and Mary “the sisters of Lazarus.” The list goes on.

Additionally, Mary of Magdala is the only woman in the Gospels given a special name based on her town of origin, a practice reserved for men. Mary is known as Mary of Magdala, the Magdalene, and Mary Magdalene. Except for her, we see that only men are given such special names in the Gospels: Jesus of Nazareth, John the Baptist, Simon the Zealot, Joseph of Arimathea, James the Younger, Simon of Cyrene. The majority of women mentioned in the Bible are not named at all; those who are named are usually mentioned by first name with associations to male family members.

CONVERSION AND DISCIPLESHIP

What about Mary Magdalene's seven demons? What were the

evil spirits and maladies Luke refers to in 8:2? Some conversion stories are famous in the Bible, as with the conversion of St. Paul. Evidence that Mary Magdalene's conversion was famous among the early followers of Jesus is found in the fact that it is used to describe her in two of the Gospels (Mark 16:9, Luke 8:2). We hear of Mary, called Magdalene, from whom "seven demons" had gone out. The key words here are *seven* and *demons*. The number seven is sacred and denotes a powerful, complete, all-consuming event; in this case a powerful, all-consuming conversion. Mary was not just healed, she was exorcized. Exorcisms in the Bible signify the power Jesus has over evil and how the Kingdom of God confronts the kingdom of evil. Mary's exorcism and subsequent conversion resulted in her complete commitment to Jesus and his ministry. How I wish we could hear her conversion story in detail!

The most significant Gospel accounts of Mary Magdalene include the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection stories. While each Gospel lists different witnesses to these events, all four concur that Mary Magdalene was among those witnesses. Additionally, perhaps the most moving encounter

of Jesus with a disciple is the wonderful resurrection account found in the Gospel of John (20:1-18). Mary's commitment was so great that she stood by Jesus through his earthly ministry, his death, and his burial. Her conversion to faith was so complete she never doubted him, even when he was in the grave.

THE EMPTY TOMB

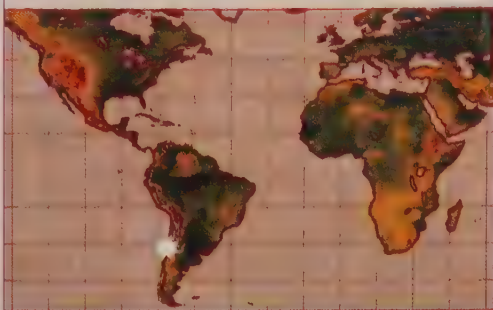
Her faith led to an amazing encounter. The Gospel of John tells us that when Mary discovers the empty tomb she runs to Jesus' male disciples and tells them the news (John 20:2). Peter and the beloved disciple return with her and look into the tomb, seeing that indeed it is empty. Then they leave. Mary stays by the empty tomb and weeps over Jesus' missing body. Then, the resurrected Jesus approaches her and calls her by name. Jesus does not approach Peter and the beloved disciple while they are there, but instead approaches Mary Magdalene after they are gone. That makes her the first witness of the resurrection. Mary carried the Good News of the resurrection to Jesus' apostles. Because of this great honor bestowed on her by our Lord, she was known as the "Apostle to the Apostles" in the early church.

The important information that the Bible gives us about Mary Magdalene makes her a model of discipleship for all followers of Jesus today. The depth of her devotion to Jesus, her unwavering faith in him and his mission, her courage to stand by him through his crucifixion and burial, her amazing encounter with him as the Risen Lord, and her apostolic duties in spreading the Good News to others are an inspiration to us all.

She was a strong woman of faith who held a leadership position within the circle of Jesus' first followers. Out of her resources, she provided for the new family of faith that formed around Jesus. Most importantly she opened herself up to conversion and transformation through her encounter with Jesus. Once she chose that path, she maintained her faith with a commitment that was extraordinary. All the fiction in the world cannot compare to the true story the Bible gives us of Mary Magdalene.

Judy Gross Chiarelli, pastoral assistant at St. Clement Church in Chicago, lives with her husband, Paul, in that great city. She holds a master of divinity degree from Catholic Theological Union of Chicago.

CHILE



GEOGRAPHY

292,280 square miles (about twice the area of Montana) along the western coast of South America

CLIMATE

Temperate; desert in the north, Mediterranean in the center, cool and damp in the south

POPULATION

15.9 million

CAPITAL

Santiago (pop. 4.6 million)

MAJOR RELIGIONS

89% Roman Catholic; 11% Protestant

LIFE EXPECTANCY

Men, 73 years; women, 80 years

INFANT MORTALITY

8.8 deaths per 1000 live births

POVERTY RATE

20.6%

LABOR FORCE

agriculture 13.6%, industry 23.4%, services 63%

HONORING THE DISSENTERS

by Anne Basye

The secret to building peace is to promote it from the ground up, said Dr. Alejandro Bendaña, president of the Center for International Studies in Nicaragua and an activist for peace and justice.

"In and of themselves, cease-fires, elections, and political power-sharing will not produce democracy and development," he said. "Negotiated agreements at the top can rapidly unravel or fail to hold much consequence for those at the bottom."

Our year-long Praying for Peacemakers column has profiled many women "at the bottom"—women in refugee camps, women who live in cultures that suppress women's voices, women with AIDS, women who live their lives amid violence and conflict.

These women are slowly and surely building peace from the ground up. They draw strength from their certainty that in God's eyes they are capable, valued, and loved. God's revolutionary way of seeing them informs their work, and their work is changing the world.

FROM POVERTY TO PEACEMAKER

Having spent much of her childhood working as a farm worker and a housemaid, Soledad Puebla of Santiago, Chile, seems an unlikely candidate for a peacemaker.

However, when she was 18, already a divorced mother, her life began to improve. That is when she began to work in the home of a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Chile (IELCH). Her hours were long, but at least she and her son could live together on the premises. The day she turned 21, she stopped by the church to pick up her paycheck and found a meeting of young people. She stayed, and within two weeks she was the group's president.

Her involvement with the youth group launched a career

in organizing. Now, 30 years later, she has served as president of her congregation and the IELCH women's organization, has worked as a regional coordinator for the Lutheran World Federation's women's department, and has been a member of the synod council. She is also an Educacion Popular en Salud (EPES)-trained health promoter who has led a network of more than 200 health teams that seek to improve the lives of residents of Santiago's shanty towns. (EPES, founded in 1982 by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Chile, continues its work as an independent foundation to improve the health and quality of life of shanty town residents.)

Additionally, Puebla is the administrator of two day-care centers owned by Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. And on top of all that, in December 2005, she completed a degree in social work in her late 40s.

LIFE AFTER DARK

Her resumé is impressive, but it omits a chapter of her life conducted after dark during the Pinochet era.

In 1973, General Augusto Pinochet seized power from President Salvador Allende and imposed a military dictatorship that lasted 17 years. In the months after the coup, the military detained thousands of students, Christians, and leftists who disagreed with the new government. Many were tortured, even murdered. The bodies were dumped into Santiago's Mapocho River.

Defying the curfew, Puebla, her grandfather, and an activist nun would slip out of their homes in a poor area of Santiago alongside the river. When the military trucks arrived and unloaded the dead, they would wade out, catch as many of the floating bodies as they could, and bury them with respect on the banks of the river. Once, Puebla found the headless body of a doctor, still dressed in surgical scrubs. She pulled the cross from around her neck and put it in his hand.



Soledad Puebla, right, with Pastor Gloria Rojas, president of IELCH.

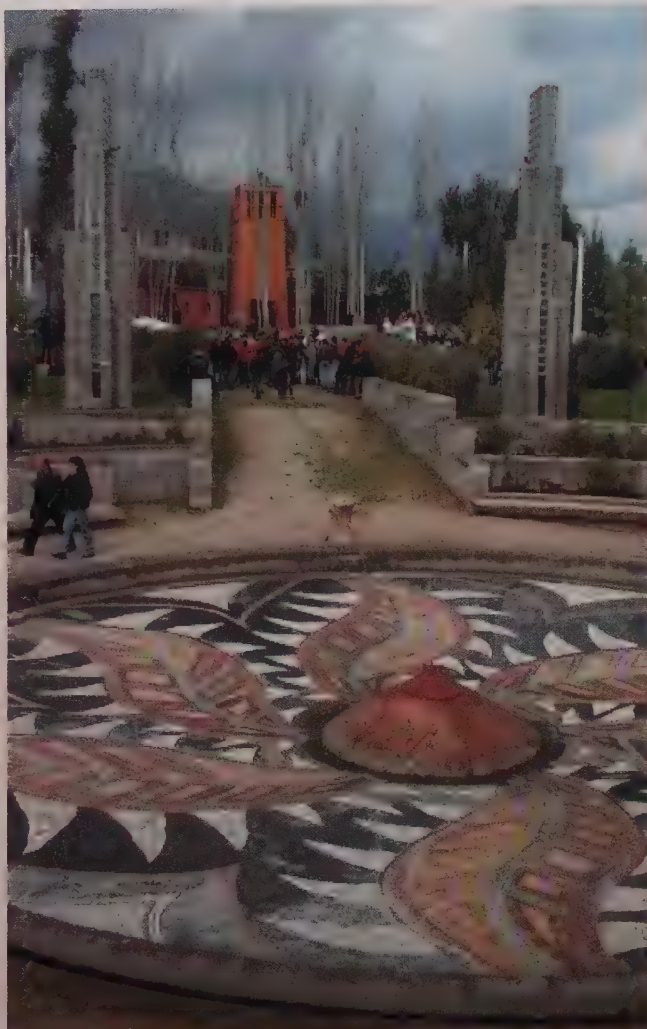
They believed their actions honored the dead. "We were motivated by pain, solidarity, and anxiety to rescue these people and bury them," Puebla said. "They were floating down the river like garbage. The Catholic sister said they deserved a Christian burial and we decided to help."

The dead were the "disappeared"—beloved friends and family members never found, never identified. In 1990, when the transition to democracy in Chile began, the Vicariate of Solidarity of the Catholic Church asked Puebla to testify about the burials by the river bank.

Outside the proceedings, families of the disappeared gathered around an open fire and a pot of soup. As Puebla and others came to testify, the families approached them with photographs. "Do you think you saw my daughter? My son?" Hoping to answer their questions, Puebla showed the officials where she and her grandfather had buried the bodies. But earthquakes and floods had changed the river's path. None were ever found.

ADVOCATING FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

Led by Lutheran Bishop Helmut Frenz, Lutherans in Chile began advocating for victims early in the



The Park for Peace "so people do not forget"

Pinochet regime. Bishop Frenz and Roman Catholic Cardinal Silva Henriquez co-founded the Committee for Peace, the country's first human rights organization. Although the military coup led to sharp divisions in the church, Puebla and other IELCH members continued to work for peace, participating in the Committee for Peace and in a human rights organization composed of Protestant churches.

When Pinochet was voted out of office in 1988, IELCH and other churches helped convert the Villa Grimaldi, where more than 3,000 people had been imprisoned and tortured, into a peace park. Torture survivors helped reconstruct the cells and buildings, and today the park features a

museum and a stone wall naming the 226 people who were executed.

"It is important to have the Park for Peace as a place to remember what the dictatorship was capable of doing and so that the people do not forget our history," Puebla said. She was among those in the IELCH who participated in the movement to create the park. "*El pueblo* (the people) make history and it is essential that we do not forget it. The Park for Peace is also an important place for so many families that lost loved ones there—it is a place where they can come with a flower to remember their loved ones."

FROM DEATH TO LIFE

In Latin America, poverty wears a woman's face.

"Women like Soledad Puebla are everywhere, in the shanty towns and marginalized areas where they have been taken advantage of by men," said the Rev. Raquel Rodriguez, director for Latin America and the Caribbean in ELCA Global Mission. "They are left alone pregnant or with a child, and have to develop skills to keep going, to survive."

While death can be the natural consequence of such poverty, for Latin women of faith, death can be a positive force. "Our poor women feel impelled by death to fight against it," said Rodriguez. "They are the ones who give life. Death threatens that life. They fight against death and its causes in order to preserve the lives they love so much."

In burying the nameless dead, Soledad Puebla fought for life. In organizing her sisters and brothers, she fights still, moving them from desperate circumstances into hope, the hope of God that overcomes death.

Anne Basye is associate director for global resources, ELCA Global Mission, and a member of Unity Lutheran Church, Chicago, Ill.

A Year of Peacemaking

In our Praying for Peacemaker articles over the last year, we've become acquainted with women who work for peace around the world in different ways. Let's recount the main messages and translate them into ways we can practice peace today.

- Welcome the stranger, like the women of the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy who reach out to African students and refugees, and the women of the Oasis hospitality room in Hong Kong who welcome foreign domestic workers from the Philippines.
- Insist that women's concerns be addressed by international relief and development agencies, as women of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India did after the tsunami. They also advocated for women's voices to be included in decisions concerning relief and development.
- Empower women with literacy and economic skills, as happens in the Lutheran World Federation's women's cooperatives in Mauritania where most women are illiterate and have few rights.
- Engage in respectful Christian-Muslim dialogue in places like Nigeria, where the Lutheran church and the Mashiah Foundation minister in ways that prevent misunderstandings and heal rifts.
- Love our neighbors as ourselves, like Nah'la Azar and other women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land who live in the midst of daily conflict.
- See everyone as the same in God's eyes, like women of Asia whose new Christian faith is increasing their self-respect and autonomy.
- Practice democracy, as women of the Kakuma Refugee Camp are doing to prepare themselves to return to their homes in southern Sudan.
- Stand in solidarity with the suffering and abused, like Soledad Puebla of Chile.

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

This issue concludes our Praying for Peacemakers column. After praying for the following countries, you will have prayed for every region in the world over the past year. By visiting the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Prayer Cycle (www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/01-02.html), you can continue to journey in prayer through every region of the world and through every week of the year, affirming solidarity with Christians all over the world, brothers and sisters living in diverse situations, experiencing diverse problems, and sharing diverse gifts.

The following list includes countries listed on the prayer calendar in June, July, and August. In addition to praying for Christians in Chile, please pray for people working for peace in the following countries: **Botswana, Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, the Caribbean: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago; Canada, USA, Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, the Pacific islands: Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Samoa, and the French Overseas Territories of New Caledonia (Kanaky) and French Polynesia (Tahiti); Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.**



WOMAN'S
HEALTH

MENOPAUSE

Fertility

Nurse

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

by Kati Kluckman-Ault

If you needed to find a nurse, where would you look? You might think of several places—a clinic, a college, or a hospital—but the one place that you might not think to look is in a faith community. Yet, since the 1980s, an increasing number of nurses are serving in parishes.

What is a parish nurse, you ask? A parish nurse is not just a nurse who happens to be in a parish. He or she is a registered nurse, prepared and educated in this specialty practice, and committed to integrating health ministry and professional nursing in a congregational setting. They practice within the guidelines of the “Faith Community Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice”

set out by the American Nurses Association and the Health Ministries Association.

While parish nursing might not be considered traditional nursing practice, it does in fact follow a long tradition of healers who care for the whole person. The role of the parish nurse takes its cue from historical religious healers—monks, nuns, deaconesses, and church nurses—those who integrated faith and health. Weaving spirituality into nursing is the foundation of this unique and holistic type of care. Parish nurses attend to the body, mind, and spirit of those they care for within the faith community.

Health is not static, but a dynamic process involving body,

mind, and spirit. Parish nurses call people to participate in their own holistic health care and to move closer to God’s vision of health and wholeness. Parish nurses enjoy uniting their faith, their knowledge of health, and their call to serve God and God’s people. Together with the staff of a faith community, the parish nurse enables a congregation to be transformed (healed) and used to further the healing mission of the church.

How do the many roles of a parish nurse translate into what health ministry might look like in your setting? What would it mean in the day-to-day life of a congregation to have a parish nurse? Is your congregation being called to

consider how it might live out a health ministry that is interwoven into its very fabric?

Here are some examples of how health ministry might look when a parish nurse is actively involved in the life of a congregation and community.

PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR WHOLE FAMILY. MY MOTHER IS HAVING SURGERY NEXT WEEK AND WE ARE ALL REALLY SCARED. WE DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO TO GET THROUGH THIS.

In this situation, a parish nurse will provide medical information while addressing the spiritual health of this family. Because the parish nurse can “translate” between the two languages of health care and spirituality, she can integrate the two issues for this family. The parish nurse can explain in understandable ways exactly what the surgical procedure might be like—and at the same time be an instrument of God’s presence with the members of the family. The parish nurse has an ongoing relationship with the family that enables her to be present for as long as it takes, unlike a busy hospital nurse. The parish nurse can pray with this family and encourage the congregation to be a spiritual support for them.

PASTOR, WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU TOOK A DAY OFF?

The ELCA has embarked on a program to encourage and inform its rostered leaders in the ways that they can better care for themselves. A parish nurse can be a valuable asset in this program. For instance, noting that the pastor of the congregation has not had a day off this month is a clue to the level of stress that this leader is experiencing—and how that stress is affecting his or her body, mind, and spirit. The parish nurse is also in a good position to talk with the pastor about stress and self-care.

I FEEL LIKE EVERYONE AROUND ME HAS MOVED ON SINCE MY WIFE DIED TWO MONTHS AGO. WE WERE MARRIED FOR OVER 40 YEARS—I CAN'T GET USED TO HER BEING GONE.

A parish nurse heard this kind of statement over and over. Family members received support and care immediately following the death of a loved one, but after a few weeks, many felt isolated and alone in their ongoing grief. This nurse organized a small group that met once a week at a nearby hospital. Here people found that others understood what it was like to have experienced that kind of life-changing loss. In the group

they were given the space to cry, talk about it, and support each other. Through the support group this parish nurse found that many people discovered the path to healthy grieving. The group that started with about 10 people meeting once a week grew into several groups—some short-term, others ongoing. All the members found support in their grief. The nurse integrated spirituality with understanding and helped the participants reach greater wellness through their experiences with a loved one’s death.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP THE PEOPLE AT THE HOSPITAL WHO ARE VERY SICK OR DYING?

One parish nurse who serves a hospital organized a group of parishioners to knit and crochet prayer shawls for the critically ill or dying. Many who are sick or near death may feel that God is far removed, and they find it difficult to pray. When this parish nurse makes her rounds and sees someone in that situation, she can offer a prayer shawl that will wrap the person as if in the arms of God. The volunteers were enthusiastic about making prayer shawls. The nurse had hoped to give away 60 by the end of the first year, but with the help of the volunteers had

distributed more than 100. She found that connecting volunteers and those in need comforts and benefits everyone involved.

Parish nursing has emerged at an exciting time. Some estimate that there are more than 10,000 parish nurses serving in the United States—at least that many have completed the curriculum offered by the International Parish Nurse Resource Center.

Some parish nurses serve in paid positions, and some are volunteers. They serve across denominational boundaries in rural, suburban, and urban congregations. Each congregation has its own personality and so does each health ministry. But one theme that seems to run through them all is the commitment to achieving the holistic wellness that

God invites us to through our salvation in Jesus Christ. When we begin to achieve wholeness, we are then called to explore how we might share it within a congregation and with those around us so desperately in need of God's healing love.

As you begin to consider how health ministry might work in your congregation, the first step is to pray for your congregation and its ministry. Read about and investigate health ministry. Pray. Speak to your pastor about the possibilities of such a ministry. Pray. Reflect on how God will use you in this ministry. Pray. Begin to gather others in your congregation who might hear a call to health ministry (hint: they do not have to be health care professionals). Pray.

Together, this process can take months or even a year. God will work throughout this process—and it will look different in each congregation. Pray.

In much of his ministry, Jesus was involved in restoring the health and well-being of the people he met. This mission is no less important for us today. God is calling our congregations to act boldly and be about the work of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ and his message of mental, physical, and spiritual wholeness.

Kati Kluckman-Ault lives in Baltimore, Md., with her husband and children. She serves at Amazing Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church as parish nurse and is a member of the Lutheran Deaconess Conference.

INFORMATION ONLINE

The International Parish Nurse Resource Center
www.parishnurses.org

Parish Nursing Health Information Resources
www.parishnursing.umaryland.edu

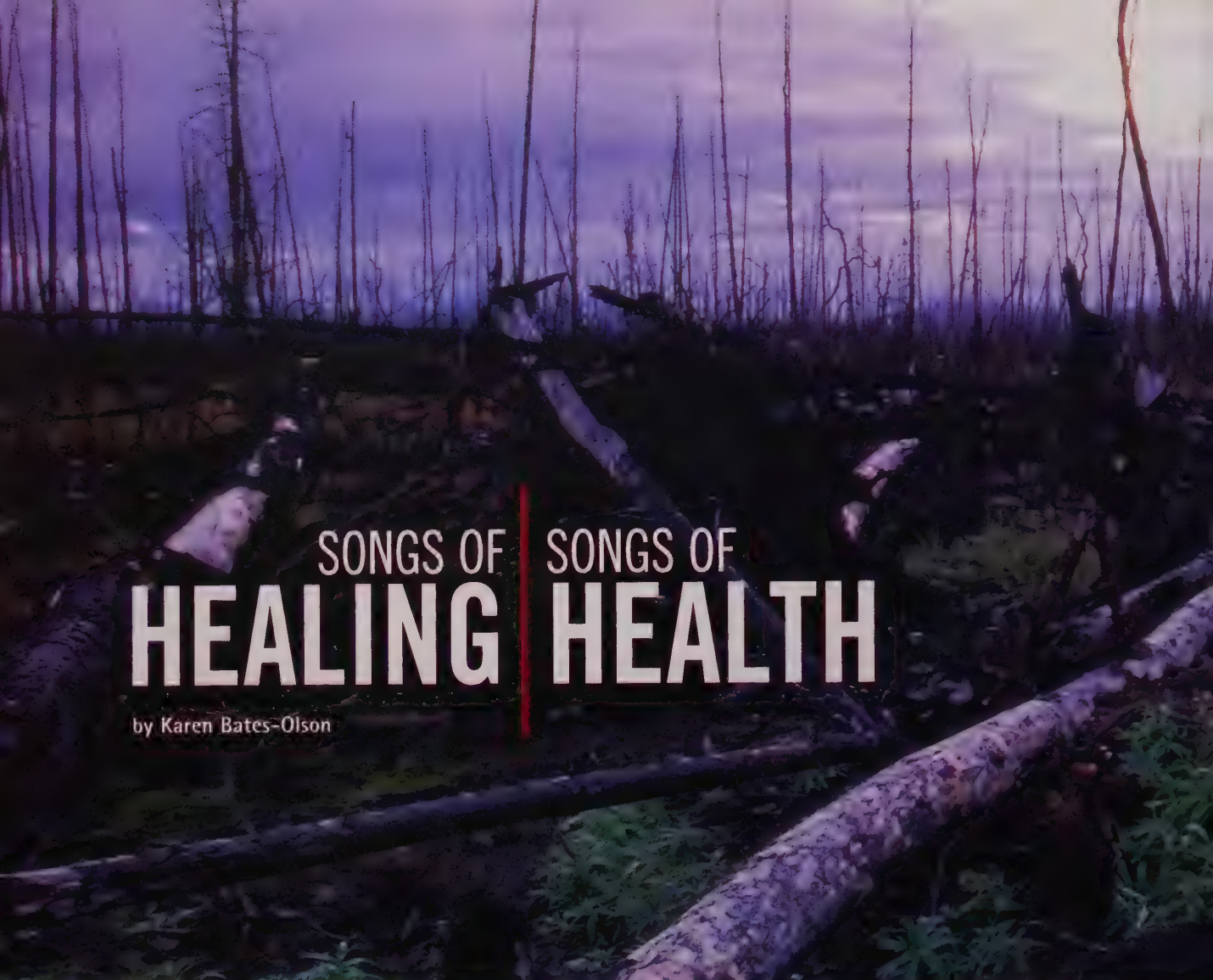
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
www.elca.org/dcs/healthmin.html

SUGGESTED READING

Health, Healing & Wholeness: Engaging Congregations in Ministries of Health by Mary Chase-Ziolek (Pilgrim, 2005)

The Essential Parish Nurse: ABCs for Congregational Health Ministry by Deborah L. Patterson (Pilgrim, 2003)

The Healing Church: Practical Programs for Health Ministries by Abigail Rian Evans (United Church Press, 1999)



SONGS OF HEALING | SONGS OF HEALTH

by Karen Bates-Olson

Grandma Edna was loving, kind, and good, hard-working and as concerned for her family as only the most dedicated, devoted parent can be. But she was not particularly taken up with the ways of faith. She rarely went to church. And when she did, she was more interested in the hats the women were wearing than in the word for the day. To be honest, I don't know if my grandmother was even baptized.

About eight years ago, when our oldest daughter was five, Grandma fell ill and slipped into a coma.

She lay unresponsive in her hospital bed. My mother nodded to me: "Karen, why don't you and Amy sing 'Jesus loves me'?" My response was distinctly unpastoral. I said I couldn't do it. I wouldn't be able to get through it. "Well," my mother asked, "will you do it for me?"

That was that. I pulled Amy up on my lap. We sat up close to Grandma's ear, close to her heart. And we sang. I sang softly—but Amy sang with all the exuberance of a lively five-year-old. "Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so. Little ones



to him belong. They are weak but he is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so.”

My grandma, for whom church had meant nothing more than a place to display the hat that would properly show her status in her small town, sat straight up in bed. Straight up in bed. Her eyes cleared. She listened. The gospel had gotten through to her even in her deep, deep sleep. Though she was dying, she was brought to life, through the Spirit, by the song of a child.

HEALING CONNECTION

The connection between songs, hymns, and healing is deep and wide. It shows up frequently in Scripture. With the women of Israel, Miriam sang a song of triumphant healing—a healing of victory after great suffering—when they had passed through a parted Red Sea where their pursuing enemies drowned: “Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea” (Exodus 15:21). Saul, struggling with depression or anxiety, bid David play

on his lyre, singing gentle songs of quiet peace. The songs seemed to soothe Saul's soul, bringing healing to a ravaged spirit (1 Samuel 16:14–23). Over and again, the psalmist cries out to make a joyful noise to the Lord, to serve the Lord with gladness and come into his presence with singing—to know the healing power of remaining in faithful relationship with the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob (Psalm 66; 81; 89; 92; 95; 96; 98; 100; 101; 108; 144; 147; 149).

The early church was bid to gather around the word, and to sing “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God” (Colossians 3:16). They were to continue to know the healing power of their crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ through the songs they sang together. And in the last book of the Bible, Revelation, all kinds of references are made to singing to the Lord, as if singing songs of praise is a sign of the fulfillment of the kingdom, where all health is restored (Revelation 5:11–14; 7:9–12; 14:1–3; 15:3–4).

THE POWER OF MUSIC

Martin Luther certainly knew the power of song for health. “Music,” he said, “is the best balm for a sad heart, for it restores contentment and quickens and refreshes the heart.” A refreshed heart is sure to have physical benefits; the emotional quickening can be a healing in and of itself. Such musicians as Bach and Handel breathe the breath of well-being, the breath of faith and love, into the music they have given to the people of God. Listen to an inspired soprano sing, “I know that my redeemer liveth” and there is health—the health of hope, the health of peace, the health of security in God's gracious hand.

Look in any hymnal—Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, inter-denominational—and you will likely find an entire section of songs on healing

and health. It is as natural to sing of the need for healing before God as it is to give God praise when health is vibrant. We take a deep breath in song. As we sing we give that breath—which in ill health can seem so fragile—to the One we pray will make all things new. That act alone is an act of faith.

And over and over in Scripture, our Lord says, it is faith that makes us well.

HYMNS FOR HEALING

In *Lutheran Book of Worship*, five hymns are dedicated specifically to healing. One stands out, powerfully arranged in word and melody: “O Christ, the Healer, We Have Come” (*LBW* 360).

Listen to the text. Breathe it in. If you know the tune, hum along while you read.

O Christ the healer, we have come;
To pray for health, to plead for friends.
How can we fail to be restored
When reached by love that never ends?

From ev'ry ailment flesh endures
Our bodies clamor to be freed,
Yet in our hearts we would confess,
That wholeness is our greatest need.¹

The hymn gives health by providing hope. It gives health by pointing toward what real need is—wholeness—even more than healing of the physical ailments from which we cry to be released. It gives health more when it is set to its hymn tune, a kind of wailing desert cry that finally resolves and finds peace. When we sing this song, we can wail. We can plead. We can even sing our despair, in the church, of all places! Before God, of all beings!

With One Voice includes 10 songs dedicated to healing—and, interestingly, pairs healing with forgiveness. To sing of God's healing power—whether in praise for

receiving health or in supplication that health might be restored—is to sing, in part, of the power of forgiveness. To be bound in unrepentant sin, whether before God or one’s neighbor, is to live in brokenness that affects the health of body, mind, and soul.

Singing of our need for release from bondage to sin actually frees us for greater song. “Create in me a clean heart, O God,” we pray with Psalm 51 in *WOV* 732, “and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free Spirit.”

Clean heart, right spirit, joy in salvation, upheld in freedom—all of that will help us breathe deeper, help us open up our minds and mouths a little more, help us be a little more aware of the person singing beside us, help bring a little more clarity to our tone as to our lives. The healing that comes with forgiveness will create beauty in the music we sing to celebrate the gift; the release that comes in music will allow us to find the gift of forgiveness, the gift of healing, in experience.

A treasure among all the beautiful healing and forgiveness hymns in *With One Voice* is “Thy Holy Wings,” *WOV* 741. If you know the tune, hum it along while you read.

Thy holy wings, O Savior,
spread gently over me,
and let me rest securely
through good and ill in thee.
Oh, be my strength and portion,
my rock and hiding place,
and let my ev’ry moment
be lived within thy grace.²

This hymn gives us a picture of the Christian life hidden gently in health under the holy wings of the Savior, secure in grace.

PEOPLE OF THE CROSS

We are not a people who believe that God is with us when things are good, when health is visible for all to see, but then question the presence of God in the face of pain and suffering.

As a colleague who struggles with cancer said, “we are people of the cross.” We believe in Jesus Christ crucified, and in Jesus Christ risen from the dead. God is as present with us in our Good Fridays as in our Easters. That’s something to sing about.

After the terrorists attacked us on September 11, 2001, one congregation gathered to share comfort and hope in prayer and worship, as did many others. When the congregation first came together, there was silence. No one could speak. No one could sing.

But not even that grief could keep the people of God from reaching out to their God in song. Not even that terror could keep the faithful from using their voices to call upon on God for hope and wholeness: “O God, our help in ages past,” a lone tenor sang, “Our hope for years to come, Our shelter from the stormy blast, And our eternal home” (*LBW* 320). Voice by voice, stanza by stanza, the congregation joined in, until by the end, all were singing: “O God, our help in ages past, Our hope for years to come. . . .”

Healing can be found in song—by finding hope in song, release in song, and God’s presence and promise in song.

Karen Bates-Olson is pastor of Lutheran Church of the Master in Pasco, Wash. Karen and her husband, Kevin, have two daughters, Amy Carol, 13, and Katie Ann, 7.

¹Fred Pratt Green, b. 1903; © Hope Publishing Co., Carol Stream, IL

²© 1983 Gracia Grindal

Session 2

Act Boldly in Crisis

by Sue Ann and Ron Glusenkamp



A day at the beach

Read aloud Mark 4:35–41.

It had been a day at the beach. A large crowd had gathered and so Jesus got into a boat to preach to the people on shore. And what did those assembled people hear? Jesus told them about:

- The parable of the sower (Mark 4:1–9)
- The purpose of parables (Mark 4:10–20)
- A lamp under a bushel (Mark 4:21–25)
- The parable of the growing seed (Mark 4:26–29)
- The parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30–32)

Mark tells us, “With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.”

Then it was evening and so it was time for a little boat ride to the other side. “A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped” (Mark 4:37).

The frightened disciples are being tossed around in their little boat. Perhaps they had thought that after they left fishing behind as their vocation, they had signed up for a pleasure cruise—something on the Love Boat or maybe even the Good Ship Lollipop. But instead it was beginning to resemble something like the Poseidon Adventure or maybe even the Ship of Fools. This wasn’t what they had imagined. Where was the leader, their captain?

- “Let us go across to the other side.” Where might be the other side for you?
- What great windstorms are arising in your life?
- Can you describe the latest weather report for your life? The 24-hour forecast? 10-day forecast? Stormy? Mild? Foggy? Dry?

“But [Jesus] was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’” (4:38)

In what might be a tinge of humor on Mark’s part, Jesus is in the stern, asleep on the cushion. Jesus is asleep and he is using the equivalent of our boaters’ life vests for his pillow! The verb used for sleep is *katheudo* (kath-YOO-do). It is also used in 13:35–37 when Jesus says, “Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.” It is also used to describe the condition in which Jesus finds Peter, James, and John in the garden (see 14:37–42).

The disciples ask the sleeping Jesus a question, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” The word used for *care* is the same word Martha used when she asks Jesus in Luke 10:40, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself?”

- Have you ever been in a crisis and felt that Jesus was in the boat with you?
- Have you ever been in a crisis and felt Jesus was sleeping?
- Look up the painting by Eugene Delacroix, "Christ Asleep during the Tempest" (www.metmuseum.org/Works_of_Art/viewOne.asp?dep=11&viewmode=1&item=29.100.131). Can you imagine how you would feel in that boat?
- How do we know when it is time to sleep and time to be awake?

A kind of hush

Jesus acts boldly in this crisis. He doesn't get defensive about sleeping. He doesn't get into a theological discussion or a scientific argument about the cause of the great windstorm, but rather, he "woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!'"

The word for *rebuke* is interesting. Jesus rebukes evil spirits in Mark 1:25, 3:12, and 9:25. In 8:31–33, Peter rebukes Jesus and Jesus in turn rebukes Peter. The disciples rebuke those who brought little children to Jesus (10:13) and the crowd rebukes the blind man in 10:48. But in this passage, Jesus rebukes the wind and speaks to the sea.

We've all heard the command, "Don't just stand there, do something!" Could it be that to act boldly for health—in crisis—might entail a reversal of that imperative? Maybe it should be: "Don't just do something, stand there!"

Jesus said, "Peace! Be still!" The first word is in the imperative voice. It is a command and often it is used to mean something like "be quiet" or "stop talking." So Jesus is telling the storm to "shut up!" The second word, also an imperative, also means

"be silent" or "refrain from talking." The words of Jesus are a holy "Hush!" Twice. Hush to the second power. Hush squared.

Personal windstorms

I have seen many great windstorms over the years in my nursing practice, Sue Ann writes. During stormy weather I have witnessed the waves of life "beating into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped" by loss from illness or injury.

About a year ago, at 11 o'clock at night, Ron and I were returning from a lovely evening out together. The weather that night was gorgeous, but a windstorm quickly arose when the phone rang.

My mother had fallen and broken her arm. She was in an emergency room in St. Louis, waiting. At that point I could only imagine the pain she was suffering. Physical pain, to be sure, but also the pain of a broken heart. She had worked so hard to recover from her stroke and was back living in her apartment with some supportive services. I knew this would be a major setback in her rehabilitation, a big disappointment, and an end to independence. The waves were beating into her boat and she was feeling swamped.

Wounds, injury, pain, loss, suffering, disappointment, and broken hearts. I am sure that if you took the time right now to ask members of your group to share, each one of you could tell of an experience of stormy weather—a crisis—of illness, injury, pain, suffering, disappointment, or a time when your boat was swamped from a loss you endured. Jesus "rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' Then the wind ceased and there was a dead calm" (Mark 4:39).

Well, I flew to St. Louis the next morning and went directly to St. Luke's Hospital, a place I had visited many times over the years. My mother,

Doris, looked so fragile and frail, so drawn and defeated. As I sat by her side and listened to her story, my heart was also breaking for the hurt she had suffered and the pain she was enduring. Fear was in her eyes as she winced. Her boat had been severely challenged by the storm.

Do you know the greatest fear of senior citizens? Falling! Well, that fear was confirmed by what had happened to my mom. This big fear had become a reality. She was in darkness.

I believe that telling one's story is an important part of healing. So I listened and I shared in her lament and her anxiety: "Why did this happen? If only I hadn't tried to reach that plug! Is God punishing me? What am I going to do? What will happen to me now?"

"Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38) Have you ever asked those questions? Have you ever cried out to God, "Why?"

Thank goodness our God is big enough and strong enough and faithful enough to hear our laments and cries of despair. In fact, every parent wants to hold and comfort their suffering child.

Only after my mother shared her story and we agreed this was a rotten deal, unfair and unfortunate, did I read her a passage from Psalm 147: "He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds."

As I read God's word to my mother, I saw the grimace on her face ease and the tension written across her forehead fade. Holding her hand, I could feel her tension easing. She seemed to be relaxing into God's unfailing love. "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased and there was a dead calm."

What a gift we can celebrate. What a promise we can cling to. What a delight we can share, knowing that Jesus does care, that he is in the boat with us, and even "the wind and sea obey him."

Learning to be still

One could hear the chariots' wheels and the pounding hooves of the horses. Clouds of dust were filling the air. The enemy was catching up. The children of Israel were in a crisis: in front of them was the sea, behind them was the Egyptian army.

Ask someone to read Exodus 14:10-14 aloud. This passage in Exodus ends with "keep still." Earlier we read that Jesus commanded the windstorm with "Peace! Be still!" Let's take a few minutes to reflect on what it means to be still. Ask someone to read Psalm 46:10-11:

"Be still, and know that I am God!

I am exalted among the nations,

I am exalted in the earth."

The LORD of hosts is with us;

the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Take a minute or two to sit together in silence and feel yourself be still. Just concentrate on feeling your breath go in and out, relaxing all your muscles.

Jesus is relaxing when the storm brews up. One of the issues we'd like to address is lack of sleep. The Wellness Council of America states that the five smartest things one can do for one's well-being are:

1. Assess your health
2. Decrease caloric intake
3. Increase physical activity
4. Quit smoking
5. Get enough sleep

Let's think about the last one—sleep. Sue Ann says that many times in her work at the hospital, she sees family members sleep-deprived from standing vigil with their ill loved one. However, in times of crisis we need more sleep in order to enhance our coping mechanisms, to be really present with someone in need.

Jesus was sleeping and at the same time he was alert and ready to respond. He could discern the right time to react. Jesus was rested, and we can learn so much from that. He was teaching us to rest during the storms of life, confident in God's promise to be present.

Perhaps tonight before you go to bed, you can read this verse: "I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O LORD, make me lie down in safety" (Psalm 4:8).

- What helps you be still?
- Can you give examples of times when you felt overwhelmed or in a crisis but were able to quiet yourself? How did you do that? Prayer? Walking outdoors? Listening to a favorite hymn?
- Have you ever been the bearer of those words, "Peace! Be still" in the lives of people who are close to you? Can you share what happened?

Sue Ann Glusenkamp is a nurse and Ron is pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church in Cherry Hills Village, Colo. He formerly served as vice president church/sponsor relations for the ELCA Board of Pensions where he was involved with their special programming on health and wellness.

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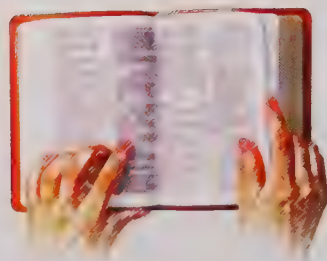
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Session 2: Act Boldly for Health

Act Boldly in Crisis

by Sue Ann and Ron Glusenkamp



Opening

Greet the women as they arrive, and when it's time, gather the group in prayer. You may pray in these words or your own:

O God, you who calmed the chaos and
quieted the storm,
as we look for health in times of crisis,
we look to you and your Word.
Help us ever trust in Jesus
and follow his example.
Guide us as we strive to glorify you
with our bodies, minds, and spirits.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

There are many ways to look at the idea of Jesus calming the storm at sea, and one way is to examine some of our beloved hymns.

As a mother stills her child,
Thou canst hush the ocean wild;
Boist'rous waves obey thy will
When thou say'st to them "Be still."
Wondrous sov'reign of the sea,
Jesus, Savior, pilot me.

"Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me" (*Lutheran Book of Worship* 334, verse 2)

What a great image: "as a mother stills her child,/ Thou canst hush the ocean wild." Jesus is Lord of all,

even the wind and the waves. Like a mother, Jesus puts his finger to his lips and speaks a holy "hush."

There might be a storm brewing in your life or the lives of the Bible study participants at this time. As the storm unfolds, Jesus says to the storm, "Peace. Be still."

Lead participants in talking through these questions:

- How does this holy "hush" of Jesus feel to you? Perhaps the "boist'rous waves" are representative of the internal struggle going on in your head, your heart, or in a relationship with a loved one.
- What helps you "be still"? Jesus speaks those words to the wind and waves, but they are a helpful reminder for us as we experience storms in life. Much of what we have written pertains to being troubled by the stormy weather. But because we know Jesus is in the boat with us, we can also see ourselves as the bearer of those words, "Peace! Be still."
- Is there a way for us to act boldly in crisis and speak a holy "hush" to someone who feels that their boat is being tossed about?

Encourage participants to commit to taking a few minutes every day to experience stillness, to sit quietly, and lift up their hearts to God in prayer. When they return for the next session, ask what that experience was like for them.

Inmost calm

There is a wonderful expression, confession, and profession of faith in the refrain of the hymn, "My Life Flows On in Endless Song" (*With One Voice* 781):

No storm can shake my inmost calm while
to that Rock I'm clinging,
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth,
how can I keep from singing?

I like it when a song ends with a question. It reminds me of the game show "Jeopardy." So the response, the refrain that any one of us can sing, or the corporate response when two or three are gathered in Jesus' name is, "Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?"

Given that creedal statement of Christ's reign, what else is there to do but sing a song? Maybe that's what it's all about: "Don't just stand there, sing something!" And the song we sing, whether it is a lullaby or a hymn of praise, might help another passenger in the storm-tossed boat experience some peace, some stillness in their heart and soul.

Closing

One way to close this session might be to pray especially for those whose lives have been disrupted or devastated by storms and floods, such as the people who are recovering from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. There are resources such as prayers and litanies on the ELCA's Disaster Response Web site at www.elca.org/disaster/resources/05-09-01-katrinaprayer.asp.

In closing, we know that in our world, there are storms. And yet, we are called to act boldly for health in crisis. We can do so because the Holy Spirit brings closure to the storms and unfolds peace for all.

SOME THINGS THAT ARE USEFUL FOR ANY BIBLE STUDY SESSION:

1. **A well-lit, well-ventilated room** with enough space, chairs, and room at the table for everyone who wants to join in. If possible, arrange the room so that participants can see one another.
2. **Bibles for everyone.** We use the NRSV most often, but it's helpful to have different translations at hand. Some other useful modern translations are the New International Version (NIV) and the Contemporary English Version (CEV).
3. **Writing materials for everyone.**
4. **Writing materials for you, the leader:** a chalkboard with chalk, whiteboard with markers, easel with easel pad and markers, or the like, so that you can post things for the group to consider.
5. **Name tags for everyone** make it clear that new people are welcome to join the group.
6. **Hymnals for everyone**, if possible. *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *With One Voice* are the ones we use.

SOMETHING USEFUL FOR THIS SESSION:

There is a painting of Christ in the boat during the storm mentioned in the participants' section. Your public library may have a copy of it that you could borrow. The artist is Eugene Delacroix, a French painter of the 19th century, and the name of the painting is "Christ Asleep during the Tempest." It hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and can be seen on the museum's Web site at www.metmuseum.org.

Lutheran Woman Today Magazine and Bible Study Overview

September 2006 – May 2007



Lutheran women have a long and rich heritage of studying God's word together. *Lutheran Woman Today* is perhaps best known for its monthly Bible study, which for years has been giving women a way to dig deeper into Scripture, become more knowledgeable about Lutheran theology, grow in faith, and connect with other women. But *LWT* offers more than just Bible study! Every issue serves up articles that inform, challenge, provoke thought and conversation, offer comfort and encouragement, and help us live out our faith in our communities and in the world. Check out the themes for our upcoming issues. We look forward to walking with you on your faith journey.

SEPTEMBER 2006 The Big Questions

From the time we were children, we've asked, "why?" To be human is to ask questions—from the heartfelt "why did this have to happen?" to the thoughtful "what does this mean?" What do we learn by asking the big questions?

Bible Study Session
Making Sense of Suffering
Theme verse: Psalm 22:1-2

Focus on Health
The Scoop on Supplements
Each year, Americans spend more than \$20 billion on over-the-counter herbal supplements that promise to do everything from boosting brainpower to curing the common cold.

OCTOBER 2006 Rich Relationships

Human beings were made to be in relationship with one another, creation, and God. What do we learn about God in our relationships? How do we live out those relationships in ways that are life-giving and faithful?

Bible Study Session
A God of Relationship
Theme verse: Genesis 1:26

Focus on Health
Beating the Blues
One in every eight American women will develop clinical depression during her lifetime.

Bible study resources for *Hope in God in Times of Suffering*

The only piece essential for the *Hope in God in Times of Suffering* study is a subscription to *Lutheran Woman Today* magazine; however, the following companion pieces add depth and meaning to the study.

LEADER GUIDE

The Leader Guide provides the Bible study leader with additional background information not found in *Lutheran Woman Today* and makes the experience of leading the group easier and more enjoyable. Included in this resource are tips on how to lead the discussion, instructions for activities, ideas on prayers, and more.

COMPANION BIBLE

This handy volume puts the study texts in one convenient place. Printed in an easy-to-read size, it offers biblical cross-references for every session. It also provides participants with space to jot notes, underline, or highlight.

BOOKMARK

The *Hope in God in Times of Suffering* bookmark is a terrific way to promote the Bible study and makes a great gift for group members. It is sold in packs of 12.

NOVEMBER 2006

In Process

God created a world that is in the process of becoming. It isn't done yet—and neither are we. The world can be a risky place, but we live and we learn, and so we grow.

Bible Study Session

Suffering as Becoming

Theme verse: James 1:12

Focus on Health

Overcoming Alzheimer's

Alzheimer's disease, a form of dementia that typically strikes after age 65, is on the rise.

DECEMBER 2006

In the Flesh

At this time of year we celebrate that the "Word was made flesh" in Jesus Christ. What does it mean to be made flesh? What does it mean to be human, both for Jesus and for us?

Bible Study Session

Suffering as the Consequence of Sin

Theme verses: Jeremiah 14:16; Exodus 1:13-14

Focus on Health

Affordable Health Care: A Christmas Wish

With more than 45 million Americans living without health insurance, millions of U.S. women are putting affordable care on their Christmas lists this year.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2007

Mouthing Off

Can we tell God when we're angry or disappointed because things aren't going our way? Is it okay to complain? Can we even be mad at God? We can tell God how we feel. God can take it.

Bible Study Session

On Voicing Our Laments

Theme verse: Psalm 13:1-2

The Book of Job

Theme verse: Job 2:10

Focus on Health

Breathe Easy!

The dead of winter can be the most difficult time of year for the 15 million Americans who live with asthma.

About the Bible study authors

Terence (Terry) and Faith Fretheim are the authors of the September 2006-May 2007 *Lutheran Woman Today* Bible study, *Hope in God in Times of Suffering*. Faith is a retired staff member of Women of the ELCA and Terry is the Elva B. Lovell Professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Faith began with Women of the ELCA when it was founded in January 1988. Terry, an ordained ELCA pastor, has been teaching at Luther Seminary since 1968.

The Fretheims may be available to introduce the Bible study to your group or synodical convention. If you are interested in hosting an event with them, contact Women of the ELCA communication specialist Ceciley Boykin by e-mail (Ceciley.Boykin@elca.org) or phone: 800-638-3522, ext. 2744. Locations and dates are based on schedule availability. Their speaking engagement dates and locations are posted on www.lutheranwomantoday.org under the Bible study tab, then 2006-2007 Bible study introduction events.

MARCH 2007

Always with You

God is present and active in the world and in our lives, even in the tough times. How can we discern the presence of God and share it—directly or by example—with those who may be struggling or hurting?

Bible Study Session

God is with Us in Our Suffering

Theme verse: Joshua 1:9

Focus on Health

Will You Need a Hysterectomy?

After C-section, hysterectomy is the surgery most often performed on American women.

APRIL 2007

Let Us Pray

God knows that communication is key to a healthy relationship. Prayer is God's gift to us, and when we speak and hear, listen and respond, we are changed and so is the world.

Bible Study Session

The God to Whom We Pray

Theme verse: Proverbs 15:8

Focus on Health

Vision Quest

Half of all American women live with vision problems, ranging from mild nearsightedness to macular degeneration.

MAY 2007

Living Hope

To say that God has entered into our lives is a word of great hope. This means that neither suffering nor evil has the last word. How do we remember that hope during hard times? How do we share that hope with others?

Bible Study Session

Suffering as Vocation

Theme verses: 1 Peter 2:21; Luke 9:23-24

Focus on Health

Better Bone Health

An estimated 8 million American women have osteoporosis, a disease in which thinning bones become more fragile, leaving women vulnerable to fractures.



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SUMMER 2007 BIBLE STUDY Act Boldly for Mission

In these two summer issues, author Kelly Fryer will explore how women can boldly take part in God's mission to love and bless and save the world. To be the church is to participate in that mission, primarily by sharing the good news about Jesus Christ.

JUNE 2007 Focus on Health Summer Skin Smarts

Each year, more than a million Americans are diagnosed with skin cancer.

JULY/AUGUST 2007 Focus on Health Stand Tall: Beating Back Pain

Four out of five women experience back pain at some point in their lives.

Hope in God in Times of Suffering

Christians, like all people, often struggle to make sense of suffering. In 2006-2007, Bible study authors Faith and Terence Fretheim explore suffering, a word they claim we use too freely: "We use it to refer to everything from a headache to the Holocaust."

Suffering is a fact of life. Nearly everyone suffers at some time, and not all of us suffer equally. Suffering can be personal, as in a serious illness or accident, or it can be communal, such as this nation experienced after Hurricane Katrina or the attacks of September 11.

Our Bible study writers make distinctions among types of suffering, causes of suffering, and the ways we can respond to it.

The key question they explore is: "What will we do with our suffering?"

We hope the sessions will spark reflection, conversation, and prayer. Join in the journey as we explore the different realities of suffering, the relationship between God and suffering, and the hope that emerges from suffering.

For more information about why we should study God and hope and suffering, see a story by the Fretheims on page 38.

To learn more

For the latest updated information about the magazine and upcoming Bible studies, go to our award-winning Web site at www.lutheranwomantoday.org.

God and Suffering: “A Real Downer”?

by Faith and Terence Fretheim

In the September issue of *Lutheran Woman Today*, we will begin a new Bible study called *Hope in God in Times of Suffering*. Here the authors tell readers about their work on this important study.



God and Suffering was our original title for the nine-session LWT Bible study for 2006–2007. We believed that our title was straightforward and would speak to the point of the study. To our surprise, when the title was field-tested, we got feedback that it was “too negative” and “a real downer.” Comments such as “How can I invite someone to attend a study with that kind of title?” led the magazine staff to ask us to reconsider. Hence the new study title is *Hope in God in Times of Suffering*.

Now, actually, we think the new title is just fine, because in times of suffering, as in all other times, our hope is in God. But by the original title, we wanted to urge readers to take a good hard look at suffering, rather than too quickly passing over it on the way to hope. Why?

Thoughts from Faith

First, because in this quick-fix, feel-good society in which we live, talking about and digging into issues of evil and suffering are important. Often, we let easy answers suffice: “It was God’s plan for Henry to die at this time”; “God needs Mary in heaven more than we need her”; “I’ll leave it up to God if he wants Mother home now.”

Could it have been God’s will that Henry not die? Might it be

that God needed Mary more on earth than in heaven? Could it be that by “leaving it up to God” we neglect our responsibilities to listen carefully, to speak God’s word of hope, and to be with the other person in his or her suffering?

As program director for Women of the ELCA from 1988 to 2005, I spent a lot of time with Lutheran women. I listened to and, at times, experienced their pain, their deep hurts, and their often intense suffering. I saw firsthand how women of faith can cope, share their distress, gather around each other for support, and “just deal with it!” I moved from surprise to awe at the incredible strength of women who have dealt with some pretty tough stuff and not only survived, but come out stronger, with a renewed zest for life, and with a deeper understanding of God’s part in their journey of suffering.

However, I have also been a part of groups and involved in the lives of individuals who felt the need to hide anything negative happening in their lives. “If I don’t talk about it, it might go away.” Or, “I simply can’t admit anything is wrong because people—or God!—might think that I don’t have enough faith.” Or, “I am too successful, too together, to admit to anything negative in

my life.” Could these be reasons why some people objected to the original title?

I believe in the strength of women, and I believe in the intelligence of women. I believe that when our knowledge of God’s working in our lives is deeper and more expansive, we are better able to deal with whatever life hands us. In addition, and more importantly, we are then better able to help others when they honor us by sharing what is going on in their lives.

A deeper biblical understanding of the God who is at work in our world will give us new ways to be responsive to the hurt, grief, trials, and suffering that surround us every day. A deeper biblical understanding of how God honors us as God’s servants in this world will lead us to fresh ways to respond—to others and to our own situations—when bad things happen. What you do with your own suffering and how you speak and act toward someone else’s are very important issues with which God presents us.

But, don’t get to answers or explanations too quickly (if at all). Live in the issues of suffering, work through them, talk about them, even get mad at God—God can take it! Then move on to what can be done, who can help,

where God is with us in the suffering, what word from God can be spoken. We can be confident



that God will enable you and others to arrive at a new place in the midst of suffering!

To draw on 1 Corinthians 13:11–13: When I was a child I read the Bible as a child, thought and reasoned as a child, but as I have grown older—chronologically, mentally, and emotionally—more is expected of me. And that means growing up in the ways we read the Bible and think about God. We will still see in a mirror dimly regarding questions about suffering, but we do have God-given gifts to help us see more clearly. Children ask wonderful questions about God, but sometimes as

adults we have not moved beyond those questions. God wants us to move into adulthood.

Thoughts from Terry

Renowned theologian Douglas John Hall in his book *God and Human Suffering* (pp. 14–15, 33–35) says: “God, the biblical God at least, is preoccupied with human suffering” . . . [indeed] “is appalled by human suffering” and has been working “at enormous cost!—to do something about it!” Because suffering is “where it is at” with us, and God wants truly to be Emmanuel (God with us), then God “must become a suffering God,” most supremely in Jesus Christ but also throughout the Old Testament. In so doing, God chooses not to overpower suffering from without (as we would often like God to do). Rather, God chooses instead to affect the healing process from within. “God has to participate in [suffering] if God would be with us.”

Suffering is real for God because it is real for each of us. If God is so concerned about human suffering, so concerned as to enter into the very heart of the lives of suffering people, shouldn't we be as concerned and engaged? Is it possible that we don't like to link God and suffering too closely,

and that is why some objected to the original title?

Such engagement with suffering seems to be more and more difficult these days. We are a suffering-evading society. We will do almost anything to avoid pain. Avoidance is how we are able to cope when we know that, if we were to look suffering straight in the face, we would not be able to cope.

A big word in the news these days is *security*. While there is a legitimate concern about this matter, have we gone too far in our efforts to shield ourselves from possible suffering? We may even have intensified our suffering through all the anxiety and fear that the focus on our security has produced. In the process, we often come to blame others for our suffering and excuse ourselves. Keep track of how often the word *enemy* occurs in our conversations. The cartoon character Pogo is pretty close to the mark when he says: We have met the enemy and he is us!

We often have difficulty acknowledging our own suffering to ourselves, let alone to others. If we do admit that we suffer, others—perhaps even we ourselves—might think that something is wrong with us. Listen to Roberta Bondi (*Christian Century*, March 20–27, 1996): “Our churches project an

image of what you're supposed to be like when you go to church: you have to be successful, you have to have a happy face. You may be going through a divorce or your kids may be on drugs, but you still need to look like you've got it together. All this indicates to people that God is interested only in people who have it together. That is really just as oppressive to my students as anything I grew up with." At the same time, in our heart of hearts, we know that suffering is real for every one of us.

Painful events such as September 11 and Hurricane Katrina (among others) seem to have deadened the impact of suffering on our lives. We have acquired an ability to listen without emotion to the most shattering data about genocide, starving African children, and violence of every kind. The movies must be more and more violent to have any effect on us because we have become so numb to pain and suffering. And perhaps we do not want to talk much about suffering because it dredges up these fears and anxieties.

We have often become indifferent to pain in the lives of other people, just hoping that it will go away so that we need do as little as possible about it. We have difficulty entering into the suffering of

others; it is almost as if their suffering is contagious and we will catch it! Look at the way we often avoid nursing homes and people with terminal illness. Look at how we neglect women and children in poverty and other marginalized people among us. Is it possible that we look away from such suffering because deep inside, we wonder whether in our evasion of suffering, we may often be the cause of the suffering of others?

We should consider more openly acknowledging our own suffering, learning better to understand what God's relation to our suffering is (and is not), and engaging ourselves more intensely in the suffering of others. Such reflections and actions may help bring a hopeful word from God more closely into our hearts and into the hearts of others. God can use what we do and say to make a difference! Our conversation about God's relationship to our suffering may sharpen our sensitivities to the needs of others.

We are called to take up the cross, to suffer beyond that which comes our way as a matter of course. We are called to stand in solidarity with those who suffer, risking our lives enough to enter truly into the suffering of others. We are called to be sufficiently nonchalant about our own person-

al condition and safety, sufficiently free from self-concern, to see and to be with those who are in need.



As God suffers, as Jesus the Christ must suffer, so must we.

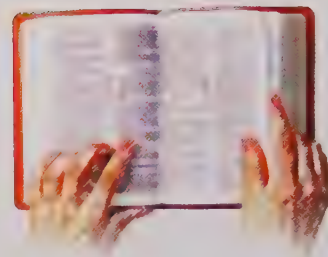
1 Peter 2:21 puts it this way: "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you should follow in his steps."

Terence (Terry) and Faith Fretheim are the authors of the September 2006–May 2007 *Lutheran Woman Today* Bible study, *Hope in God in Times of Suffering*. Faith is a retired staff member of Women of the ELCA and Terry is the Elva B. Lovell Professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn.

Session 3

Act Boldly toward the Goal

by Sue Ann and Ron Glusenkamp



The theme passage of Scripture for this study is Philippians 3:9–14. What is Paul’s situation as he writes this letter? He is in prison, but he is so filled with joy that he can encourage and exhort the believers in Philippi. He uses the word *rejoice* several ways in this letter. See verses 1:18; 2:17, 18, 28; 3:1; 4:4, 10.

Then there is the wonderful hymn of praise about Jesus in 2:5–11. Paul reminds us to be of the “same mind” as Christ, that is, to live as copycats. We are to follow Jesus, to act like him, to imitate him (also see Ephesians 5:1).

Can you remember a time when you played dress-up and imitated someone in your family? Have you ever seen a young child imitate something you did?

Then we are told in Philippians 2:7 that Christ “emptied” himself. Let’s talk about that for a minute.

Extreme makeover

In Philippians 3:4–6 Paul tells us about his past. If anyone could brag about his credentials, Paul could. But all these things (see verse 5) don’t add up to

anything anymore. In fact, because of Jesus, the past is past and Paul now understands all those old gains to be less than nothing, to be loss.

Read Mark 8:31–38.

Some people live their lives with the attitude: “finders keepers, losers weepers.” Jesus turns that schoolyard saying upside-down: Finders are weepers and the losers are the keepers. Paul tells us that the Gospel changes how we account for our life.

In Philippians 3:8, Paul tells us, “More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.” The word for *rubbish* Paul uses here has the sense of “refuse, leavings, dirt, dung.” Paul is writing about righteousness (verse 9). He makes it clear that what matters most is to be found in Christ, not having the righteousness that comes from the law but the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ.

- What does it mean to empty ourselves?
- Conversely, what does it mean to fill ourselves?
- How might we empty ourselves in order that others might be filled?
- How can we rejoice in all of this?

- Are there times when we appeal to righteousness of our own, as opposed to that of Jesus Christ?
- Do we sometimes think we can gain our way with God?
- How does it feel to turn the old saying around and celebrate being a loser, not a finder?

Keep on keeping on

In verse 12 Paul writes, “Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.” These words express the challenge and the opportunity that followers of Jesus have to act boldly toward the goal. The word translated as *press on* also means “strive, pursue, seek after.” It is used in other passages such as Romans 9:30, 31; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; and 1 Peter 3:11.

We read about several people in the Gospels who had a simple goal: to have an encounter with Jesus. Do you remember these goal setters and achievers?

- Zaccheus who climbed a tree to get a look at Jesus (Luke 19:1–10)
- The woman who touched the hem of Jesus’ garment (Matthew 9:21)
- The men who lowered their friend through the roof to be forgiven and healed by Jesus (Mark 2:3–6)

There are many types of goals and many ways to achieve them. Paul’s goal is to strive for the reward of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus (verse 14).

Now as Lutheran Christians we get a little nervous when people start talking about “rewards.” What do you think Paul is saying in these passages? Does it add clarity or does it confuse the situation for you?

Take another look at Philippians 3:8b–14.

Paul writes, “but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus” (3:13–14). Sometimes groups that have a wonderful history have a hard time moving toward the future. The past can be so satisfying (or maybe memories of it

are a little rosy and romanticized) and feel so secure that people are tempted to stay there. Paul talks about the need to forget what lies behind and strain forward, toward the future.

Toward the goal

Every January people start off the new year with optimism and a bunch of resolutions. The gym I visit sees a dramatic increase in new members at the beginning of each year. We regulars see new people with new gym bags, new shoes, and new outfits crowding our space. We know that in two or three weeks, the new gym bags will be in a car trunk, the new shoes out in the garage, the new outfits in the back of the closet—and most of the new members gone. Their resolutions will evaporate, just like the fancy designer water in their fancy designer water bottles.

Why do most people usually fail when they make resolutions or decide to act boldly toward a goal? There are many reasons (some of which I know all too well), ranging from ill health to sloth, from lack of time to lack of energy. Sometimes we are just not prepared to make a change in our habits or our lives, even though we want to. But I know when I set SMART goals, I have a better chance of meeting them.

How can goals be smart? By being:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Trackable

Sue Ann’s marathon story

On my office door is a small wooden sign: “It’s never too late!”

In 1978 I ran a half-marathon in New Haven, Connecticut, with the intention of running the Boston

The Web site www.elcaforwellness.org is a helpful resource that describes SMART goals. This is a collaborative effort between the ELCA Board of Pensions and the Vocation and Education unit of the ELCA, in cooperation with the Mayo Clinic.

Marathon later that year. On June 5, 2005—some 27 years later—I finally met that goal by finishing my first marathon in San Diego, California. What a thrill! I recall running down the home stretch, tearfully shouting, “I’m 50 years old and I’m finally finishing my first marathon! It really is never too late!”

I ran to fulfill my dream and to ease the sting of becoming a half-centenarian, but I also ran to support the American Stroke Association. Running in honor of stroke survivors was very meaningful to me. My mother, Doris, suffered and survived a severe stroke in 2003.

My goal was *Specific*: I would run the San Diego marathon that year. My goal was *Measurable*: I would run a 26.2-mile course. My goal was *Achievable*: I worked with Train To End Stroke (TTES), an organization that helps people train for the event. My goal was *Realistic*: I had a well-thought-out training regimen and changed my routines to accommodate it. And my goal was *Trackable*: My training schedule had weekly goals that took into account what I needed to do every day.

Whether your goal is to set aside time every day for reading the Bible, to get your financial house in order, or to begin exercising, thinking SMART can help you. “It’s never too late!”

The real deal

It seems sometimes that there is some ambivalence in the church about setting goals. Maybe people think that by setting a goal we might be infringing on the

work of the Holy Spirit. Or maybe we don’t want to set a goal for fear of being disappointed. And yet, by not having goals, we set ourselves up for a lack of participation, support, and energy in our parishes.

I have come to believe that if we don’t set goals in certain areas of our individual and corporate lives, we are not practicing good stewardship. When we are clear about what we are trying to achieve, we can harness resources and create energy around a project, event, or issue.

Press on

Read Philippians 3:12.

Both Sue Ann and I try to do some kind of physical activity each day. We get lots of positive benefits from running and cycling, and we enjoy them. But we didn’t start by running or cycling miles each day: we started with baby steps.

Often when people want to do something new—whether it is starting a new exercise program or increasing the number of people coming to circle meetings at church—they focus on the whole project, on going the entire distance. It’s helpful to remember that two SMART goals are: *Achievable* and *Realistic*. Starting small is smart. As we grow in ability and confidence, we can stretch a bit and increase the goal.

Sue Ann and I can also tell you about the many times we have stumbled. It seems that all is going well, we’re enjoying what’re doing—and *oops!*—we’re on the ground, rubbing a knee or elbow. Acting boldly toward the goal isn’t always smooth: expect some slips along the way. The important thing is to get up, bandage the scrapes, evaluate what went wrong, and either keep going or adjust your plan.

A key part in pressing for a goal is our *motivation*. As Lutheran Christians we believe that we are saved by grace through faith. Apostle Paul in the Philippians text (3:8b–14) delicately balances the re-

In the first session of this Bible study, we looked at balance. If you were to set some goals to help you achieve more balance in your life, what would they be?

In the second session of the study, we looked at acting boldly for health in crisis. If you are experiencing a crisis or difficulty in some area of your life right now, what goals can you set to help you weather the storm? If you are not in difficulty right now, what goals could you set that would help you prepare for the inevitable storms of life? What goals could you set for yourself to help someone close to you weather the storms in her life?

activity of humanity with the pro-activity of God. So if we are asked why we do what we do, our answer is simple: "because Christ Jesus has made me his own." That's the real deal!

Health, our shared endeavor

So now you're wondering what might be a good goal to press toward. Consider these resolutions, which arise from the church's social statement, *Caring for Health—Our Shared Endeavor*, and were adopted by the church at the 2003 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. The title accurately describes the reality: Health is a shared endeavor. What would it look like if we would act boldly toward these goals?

To challenge all members of this church to become good stewards of their own physical and mental health by attending to preventive care, personal health habits, diet, exercise, and recreation, and by making prudent use of health-care resources;

To urge all members of this church to develop

reasonable expectations for their own health and for the health care they receive at each stage of life and to engage in thoughtful preparation with health-care professionals and loved ones for difficult choices in their health care.

Caring for Health—Our Shared Endeavor

You can read the entire social statement at: www.elca.org/socialstatements/health/resolutions.html

Women of the ELCA has launched a health initiative, "Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls," committed to promoting women's complete health: physical, spiritual, and emotional. To learn more and find resources, go to www.womenoftheelca.org/getinvolved/health.html.

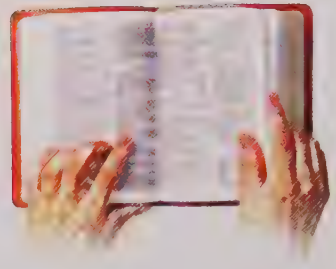
Sue Ann Glusenkamp is a nurse and Ron is pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church in Cherry Hills Village, Colo. He formerly served as vice president church/sponsor relations for the ELCA Board of Pensions where he was involved with their special programming on health and wellness.

SUPPORT HEALTHY HEARTS

Women of the ELCA is supporting new federal legislation aimed at fighting heart disease in women, and your participation will help. The Heart Disease Education, Analysis, Research, and Treatment (HEART) for Women Act would amend the Public Health Service Act to improve the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases in women. To find out more and to see a letter we hope you'll print, fill out, and send to your state's lawmakers, visit www.womenoftheelca.org/getinvolved/health.html.

Session 3: Act Boldly for Health

Act Boldly toward the Goal



by Sue Ann and Ron Glusenkamp

Getting ready to lead

As you prepare for this session, turn to page 33 of this issue of *LWT* for some tips on how to prepare. The main text we are examining in this session is Philippians 3:8b–14, with glances at other parts of Philippians.

Opening

Greet the women as they arrive, and when all is ready, call the group together in prayer. You may pray in these words or your own.

Holy God, you who inspired St. Paul
to rejoice in his prison cell,
and called him to press on toward the goal,
we look to you and your holy word for wisdom.
May we treasure the surpassing value
of knowing Christ above all things.
Guide us as we strive to glorify you
with our bodies, minds, and spirits.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

You might gather the group to sing “Rejoice, the Lord is King!” (*LBW*, 171).

Exploring *rejoice*

Paul uses the word *rejoice* in several ways in his letter to the Philippians. Ask participants to take turns reading the verses listed in the first paragraph on page 42.

What is it that makes Paul so joyful, even though he is in prison awaiting execution?

We are told in 2:7 that Christ emptied himself. Talk about the questions in the box on page 42.

Take a few minutes to ask participants to write out their answers to the questions in the box on page 42 of the Bible study. Invite the group to share their responses, if they feel comfortable doing so. If some answers call forth group discussion, welcome the opportunity.

To close the session, call the group together in prayer. You may use these words or pray in your own.

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings
with your most gracious favor
and further us with your continual help,
that in all our works,
begun, continued, and ended in you,
we may glorify your holy name,
and finally, by your mercy,
obtain everlasting life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.
(*LBW*, p. 49)



GRACE NOTES

An Openness to Change

by Linda Post Bushkofsky

Sometimes you can be so busy that you don't realize seismic shifts in your own life. My daughter told me a favorite pair of earrings was "so '80s," as if that was bad. Somewhere along the way, I've become middle-aged. How did that seismic shift happen without me noticing?

Women of the ELCA also is seeing some seismic shifts, and some of us haven't noticed them yet. The average age of an ELCA member is 54, but the average age of an American is 10 to 20 years younger. What's the average age in your congregational unit?

Those of us who have been part of this organization know how important it is to spend time in fellowship, study, service, and prayer with other Lutheran women. And, I've never heard anyone say "we don't want those younger women joining our organization." To the contrary, I often hear a passionate desire that younger women become part of the organization. But actions speak louder than words, and sometimes our actions are not so welcoming.

Our mainstay activities—like quilting—do not always interest younger women. Our schedules—*midday* Bible studies—may not mesh with the busyness of younger women. One way to welcome them is to listen to how *they* would like to spend time in fellowship, study, service, and prayer. What is important to them? What are their faith struggles? Our organization is large and flexible enough to welcome all women in the church. We needn't give up what we are now doing, but we should begin to

create space for new and different activities.

"An openness to change and the ability to allow for diversity in functioning shall be among the desired results of the structure of this organization." That's one of the principles of Women of the ELCA, found in the Churchwide Constitution.

I'd like to challenge each of you to be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. I encourage you to start by talking with a woman in your congregation who is 10 to 20 years younger than you. Tell her why the women's organization has been important to you, and ask about her faith journey. If you don't have many younger women in your congregation, find one in your community or family. Begin to understand what it's like to be a younger Christian woman today.

Then I encourage you to do some reading. Try *Doing Girlfriend Theology: God-talk with Young Women* by Dori Grinenko Baker (Pilgrim Press, 2005); *Midlife Crisis at 30: How the Stakes Have Changed for a New Generation* by Lia Macko and Kerry Rubin; *My Red Couch: And Other Stories on Seeking a Feminist Faith*, edited by Claire Bischoff and Rachel Gaffron (Pilgrim Press, 2005). Or ask a younger woman what she is reading and try that.

As you enter into these conversations and your reading, open your heart, mind, and ears to the possibility of change for Women of the ELCA.

Linda Post Bushkofsky is executive director of Women of the ELCA.

WE RECOMMEND

RESOURCES FOR ACTION, ADVOCACY, PROGRAMS, OR FURTHER STUDY

THE ROAD TO WELLNESS

Our Journey to Wellness: Conversations along the Way, a new, free, and downloadable resource, is a starting point for participating in Women of the ELCA's health initiative, "Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls." It is a guide to having healthy dialogue in your community about women's total health: physical, emotional, and spiritual. *Our Journey to Wellness* will help ground your understanding of women's total wellness in non-threatening, intergenerational, faith-centered dialogue.

This resource may be used as a Women of the ELCA unit program, as part of a cluster or conference event, or as part of a synodical women's convention. Use it also with your confirmation class, young adults (especially those beginning their careers), with congregation council members, or congregation committees. You may choose to discuss this over several sessions or over the course of a weekend, perhaps as a retreat.

A copy of *Our Journey to Wellness* was included in the spring 2006 mailing to congregations. You also can download a PDF file from www.womenoftheelca.org/resources/journey_to_wellness.html by clicking on the "Printable Version" icon in the right-hand column.

TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Hectic schedules seem to be a way of life these days. When was the last time you took time for yourself? Join Women of the ELCA at a weekend wellness

seminar and learn how to take back your "me" time.

Participate with other Christian women in discussions about health issues that affect us emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually. Spend the weekend with health professionals learning about ways to create a better quality of life for you and those around you. Take part in self-assessment exercises, Bible studies, and meditation techniques.

The seminars, to be held in Chicago, Illinois, and Greensboro, North Carolina, run from Friday evening through Sunday afternoon. Sunday's optional activities will help you learn how to replicate this event in your community, congregation, or women's group.

Seminar dates are: Chicago, September 29–October 1; and Greensboro, October 27–29. For more information, visit www.womenoftheelca.org. Register early—space is limited!

ENHANCE YOUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Is it time to awaken your mind, body, and spirit? Does the thought of breathing pristine mountain air entice you to visit Montana? If your answer is yes, consider participating in Women of the ELCA Rocky Boy (Reservation) cross-cultural experience September 13–17, 2006.

The Rocky Boy Reservation, home to the Chippewa Cree tribe, is located in the Bear Paw Mountains of north central Montana. Women of the ELCA and women of the Rocky Boy reservation participate in an intergenerational program of cultural immersion and exchange. A simple feast, First Nation drum and song, and dance will conclude the experience.

The staff of the Our Saviour Lutheran Church (ELCA) helps with the cultural experience. The church's compound, which includes a church, chapel, parish house, and several cabins, is part of the reservation. Anti-racism education is suggested as preparation for the experience.

the retreat package is \$275 and includes most meals, lodging, program, and materials. Participants arrange and fund their own transportation. Remarkably, this immersion experience is not expensive. For more information about how to register, visit www.womenoftheelca.org and click on "Cross-cultural immersions" under Quick Links on the right side of the page. Or call Inez Torres Davis at 638-3522, ext. 2428.

END WORLD HUNGER

Do you know that one person dies from hunger or hunger-related diseases for every deep breath you take? Had you heard that 840 million people in the world—or one of six—are chronically hungry? The good news is that you can help, and you have through Women of the ELCA. World Hunger relief, development, education, and advocacy.

Find out more with a free, easy-to-use 10-minute slide show produced by the ELCA. The DVD presentation offers a brief history of ELCA World Hunger, outlines where your dollars go, introduces our partners, highlights development goals, and provides information about battling world hunger. Request the free DVD, "For Such a Time as This" (800-638-3522-4), and other World Hunger Disaster Response resources from Augsburg Fortress (800-328-4648, www.augsburgfortress.org/worldhunger). Single copies of the DVD may be obtained by contacting RIS@elca.org, 800-638-3522. For more information, visit www.elca.org/hunger.

Donations to ELCA World Hunger can be mailed to Women of the ELCA, P.O. Box 71256, Chicago, IL 60671-0256. Make checks payable to Women of the ELCA; indicate "ELCA World Hunger" on the memo (even if using the offering transmittal form B).

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Bible Study On-line Discussion

www.womenoftheelca.org, click Discussion Board at top.

Opinions expressed in the magazine are those of the writers and, except for the Women of the ELCA departments and the Bible study, are not necessarily those of Women of the ELCA. Letters to the Editor must include your name, city, and state. LWT publishes letters representative of those received on a given subject. Letters may be edited for space. Letters must be signed, but requests for anonymity will be honored.



AMEN!

Calm Our Storms

by Catherine Malotky

I ENVY JESUS' FRIENDS IN THAT BOAT. I'm sure the storm was frightening, especially for those who grew up fearing the deep as the place of unpredictable chaos.

For me, it would have been small consolation that I took my swimming lessons in my youth. The boat was already being swamped. The waves were fierce. The sea, perilous.

But Jesus, sleeping soundly in the front of the boat, seemingly oblivious, was there. In the flesh. Incarnate. They woke him up as I would have. "Help! We have an emergency here!" Adrenaline pumping, they scrambled to wake him as nature's full power battered that fragile little boat. How could he ignore this, they wondered, and yet, Jesus was there.

We've had experiences that rival those dangerous waves that day. Some of us have endured a hurricane, felt the earth shake beneath our feet, fled from fire, felt the deadly calm before a tornado. In such times, our prayers are urgent: "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" Our urgency makes us bold to call to him, expecting, even demanding a response. And we may, whether we are spared in that moment of danger or are blessed by the help of others as we recover, hear the voice of Jesus command, "Peace! Be still!"

But there are other, more subtle times of danger. These evolve slowly, trouble building over days or months or even years. Without an immediate threat, I may not see the gathering storm. I may not notice

my strength fading or my trust eroding. I may get used to adjusting for the motion of the waves, standing off-balance. Maybe I forget about Jesus because I am so used to managing on my own.

Until the boat begins to founder. A child is arrested for drunk driving. A spouse's anger leaves a blackened eye. Staying in bed all day feels better than facing the world. The last foreclosure notice comes in the mail. When my strength is gone or simply faded, do I remember that I can make my way to the front of the boat and demand Jesus' attention?

The shame of forgetting along the way, of not tending to our health, can glue us to our seats, terrified by the storm around us. Like our forebears in that boat, we can see only the raging deep around us. We have trouble trusting that you intend good for us, God, not fear and chaos.

In these times, when our health (no matter whether physical, emotional, or spiritual) has so eroded, give us the courage to demand of you the hope and strength that you offer freely. Give us the strength to see more than the deep, but to see Jesus in the midst of the storm, promising life out of every death. Restore our trust to believe that there will be a tomorrow. Make us whole, healthy, and strong. Amen.

Catherine Malotky serves the ELCA Board of Pensions as retirement planning manager. An ordained pastor, she has also been an editor, teacher, parish pastor, and retreat leader.